

## One library school or two?

Alan Richardson

*Mr Richardson's term of lecturing at the University of Western Ontario has caused him to examine the two levels of library education in New Zealand in the light of the clear distinction made in Canada and the United States between librarians and library technicians.*

Now that I have returned to New Zealand after a term as a Visiting Lecturer in the School of Library and Information Science of the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, it seems a suitable opportunity to write this article giving some of my thoughts on library education in general, and the situation in New Zealand in particular. The views I express here are mine alone, they do not necessarily represent the views of the National Library of New Zealand nor of the staff of the New Zealand Library School. I hope there will be some discussion of these opinions in the pages of this journal over the next few months. If this article helps to create a wider understanding of some of the problems which library educators face, my task will have been worthwhile.

Librarianship is, we firmly believe, a profession for which a professional education is given. It is, however, acknowledged by most people that a great deal of work carried out in libraries is routine or clerical in nature for which a professional education is not required. We can be more specific by saying that a professional education is required to make an informed decision on the choice of a classification scheme for a library, but that sending out overdue notices is clerical work. If the distinctions were always as clear as this, our task would be easier, but it is a fact that there are grey areas where we are not certain whether the work is professional or clerical. Some people would say, for example, that cataloguing is not a professional task;

MR RICHARDSON is Assistant Director, New Zealand Library School, Wellington.

others would declare that original cataloguing is professional work, but copy cataloguing is not. Many writers have made an attempt to clarify these distinctions so it is not necessary for me to go into them in further detail here. What we do need to note is that within the walls of a library, personnel are operating on a variety of levels. Clearly there are implications for library education in all this. Either we recognise the different levels and educate people accordingly, or we can simply give all comers the same library training and hence break down the barriers between professional and non-professional work. In this latter case performance on the job would be all that mattered. The official stand taken by the American Library Association is to recognise the levels and train for work within each level. It will be of interest for us then to look fairly closely at what this body says. The following quotations are from an A L A policy statement. (1)

- 3 To meet the goals of library service, both professional and supportive staff are needed in libraries. Thus the library occupation is much broader than that segment of it which is the library profession, but the library profession has responsibility for defining the training and education required for the preparation of personnel who work in libraries at any level, supportive or professional.
- 8 The title "Librarian" carries with it the connotation of "professional" in the sense that professional tasks are those which require a special background and education on the basis of which library needs are identified, problems are analyzed, goals are set, and original and creative solutions are formulated for them, integrating theory into practice, and planning, organizing, communicating, and administering successful programs of service to users of the library's materials and services. In defining service to users, the professional person recognizes potential users as well as current ones, and designs services which will reach all who could benefit from them.
- 9 The title "Librarian" therefore should be used only to designate positions in libraries which utilize the qualifications and impose the responsibilities suggested above. Positions which are primarily devoted to the routine application of established rules and techniques, however useful and essential to the effective operation of a library's ongoing services, should not carry the word "Librarian" in the job title.
- 13 The *Clerk* classifications do not require formal academic training in library subjects. . . . Familiarity with basic library terminology and routines necessary to adapt clerical skills to the library's needs is best learned on the job.
- 14 The *Technical Assistant* categories assume certain kinds of specific "technical" skills; they are not meant simply to accommodate advanced clerks. . . . A *Library Technical Assistant* is a person with certain specifically library-related skills—in preliminary bibliographic searching for example, or utilization of certain mechanical equipment—the performance of whose duties seldom requires him to call upon a background in general education.



- 15 The *Associate* categories assume a need for an educational background like that represented by a bachelor's degree from a good four-year institution of higher education in the United States. . . . Persons holding the B A degree, with or without a library science minor or practical experience in libraries are eligible for employment in this category. . . .
- 17 The . . . professional category—*Librarian* . . . —assumes responsibilities that are professional in the sense described in paragraph 8 above. A good liberal education plus graduate-level study . . . are seen as the minimum preparation for the kinds of assignment implied. . . .
- 20 Until examinations are identified that are valid and reliable tests of equivalent qualifications, the academic degree . . . is recommended as the single best means for determining that an applicant has the background recommended for each category.
- 24 Training courses for Library Technical Assistants at the junior or community college level should be recognised as essentially terminal in intent (or as service courses rather than a formal program of education), designed for the preparation of supportive rather than professional staff. . . .
- 25 Emphasis in the two-year Technical Assistant programs should be more on skills training than on general library concepts and procedures. . . .
- 27 Certain practical skills and procedures at all levels are best learned on the job rather than in the academic classroom. These relate typically to details of operation which may vary from institution to institution, or to routines which require repetition and practice for their mastery. The responsibility for such in-service parts of the total preparation of both librarians and supportive staff rests with libraries and library systems rather than with the library schools.
- 28 The objective of the master's programs in librarianship should be to prepare librarians capable of anticipating and engineering the change and improvement required to move the profession constantly forward. The curriculum and teaching methods should be designed to serve this kind of education for the future rather than to train for the practice of the present.

We find, then, that we have two major categories of library personnel. These are, again to use the A L A's terms, "professional" and "supportive". In the professional category we talk of "librarians", not "professional librarians", any more than we talk of "professional doctors". In the supportive category the A L A suggests we use the terms "Library Associate", "Library Technical Assistant", and "Clerk". All these terms are fully developed in the *Statement of policy*, but enough has now been said to understand what the A L A is talking about. We need now to relate some of this to the situation in New Zealand.

The categories here are not clearly defined at all. The distinction to many New Zealand librarians is either not clear or not accepted. For example, the regulations for the award of the ANZLA state "... 2 years are to have been spent on work requiring the knowledge and judgement of a *professional librarian*" (2) (my italics). We appear to have two possibilities open to us. One is to clarify the issue by simply saying that a difference in entry qualification is of no importance, the only thing that matters is performance on the job; and the other is to accentuate the distinctions between the two groups. It seems scarcely satisfactory to continue as we are at the moment apparently unsure even of the issues. The present state of affairs is leading us to a problem regarding the relative positions of the two qualifications at present available in New Zealand. I have frequently heard it said that a Certificate holder is as good a librarian as a Diploma holder, and I expect that the inference behind this is that there is little difference in the qualification. Strangely, even the students themselves contribute to this. Certificate holders will point to those areas of training similar to the Diploma course, and some Diploma students will even say to Certificate students that they cover the same ground but that what takes a whole year for the graduates is covered by the Certificate course in twelve weeks! The fact that members of the Library School staff teach both courses is probably no help in clarifying this misconception.

The distinction in Canada is much more clear. Graduates attend university library schools and qualify for the degree of Master of Library Science, whilst others (who may be graduates) attend library technician programmes in the community colleges. The graduates are trained for positions of professional responsibility. Their function in libraries is what is detailed in paragraph 28 of the ALA policy, quoted above. Day to day library work is carried out by technician-trained personnel whilst the long term planning is the province of the professionals. Clarifying, or attempting to clarify, the distinction, however, does not automatically solve all your problems. Some very capable technician-trained people are asking strongly for more recognition by the profession. The distinction between the graduate "planners" and the technician "doers" is not, then, always a happy one. There is also the fact that the number of professionals in libraries is not increasing as quickly as the number of technicians. Put another way, you could say that the proportion of professional librarians is decreasing.

In Librarianship, as in many other fields, the role of the professional is constantly being upgraded to reflect new demands and new responsibilities. Many problems which were once considered of central professional concern have now been resolved, in whole or in part, and procedures have been established and rules set down to govern the activities connected with their control. Such routinized tasks can now be assigned to personnel with much less preparation, while the highly qualified person moves on to new or unresolved challenges.



This pattern of development is perhaps most dramatically illustrated in the health sciences, where technical assistants now perform a great many functions which were once the sole province of the fully qualified doctor. In Librarianship, a similar development is taking place; as once-professional tasks are now turned over to non-professional personnel, the Librarian is expected to turn his or her attention to increasingly challenging problems in the planning, management, evaluation, operation, and design of services. (3)

This sort of phenomenon is seen particularly in the cataloguing area where automation is meaning that you need fewer professionals for original cataloguing and more technicians who seek and copy entries from available sources. The problem of the division between the two groups becomes much more seriously acute in those libraries which have become unionised. The unions appear to be being formed on the basis of the professional/supportive staff distinction. This strengthens the divisions and causes a single occupational group strangely divided within itself. If you wish to pursue this matter further, it is the subject of an article in *Canadian library journal* (4).

The alternative to strengthening the divisions is not really much more attractive. You completely destroy the attempt to make librarianship a basically graduate profession since you allow Certificate holders and Diploma holders equal positions with equal pay and equal promotion prospects. This is scarcely conducive to graduate recruitment. There must, then, be another factor which applies in libraries other than the basic qualification. It is, of course, performance on the job. Most librarians can point to poor Diploma holders and excellent Certificate holders. Slotting people on the basis of the entry qualification does not seem to allow for this difference in ability on the job. In his Presidential address to the 18th Biennial Conference of the Library Association of Australia, W. C. Brown had this to say:

We have arrogantly created a library situation where there are "librarians—the professionals" and "others". Professionalism is not something gained through royal charter or by being written into awards or by carrying a piece of paper from an academic institution. Professionalism is an attitude of mind about work. Some librarians have it and a significant number do not. Many other kinds of library workers have it too. (5)

I could not agree with him more. Related to this particular fact is the award of the ANZLA. I frequently hear this referred to as a library qualification, but I could not find it thus called in the NZLA Handbook. Fellowships and Associateships are referred to as "titles of merit" and we would do well to bear this in mind. What the award of an Associateship should indicate is that the person is competent on the job. It therefore should be more readily available for Certificate holders and less automatic for Diploma holders. The 1976 Annual General Meeting of the NZLA was therefore right in supporting the new regulations for the award of the ANZLA, but whether changing the wording of regulations will actually have the desired effect is, I

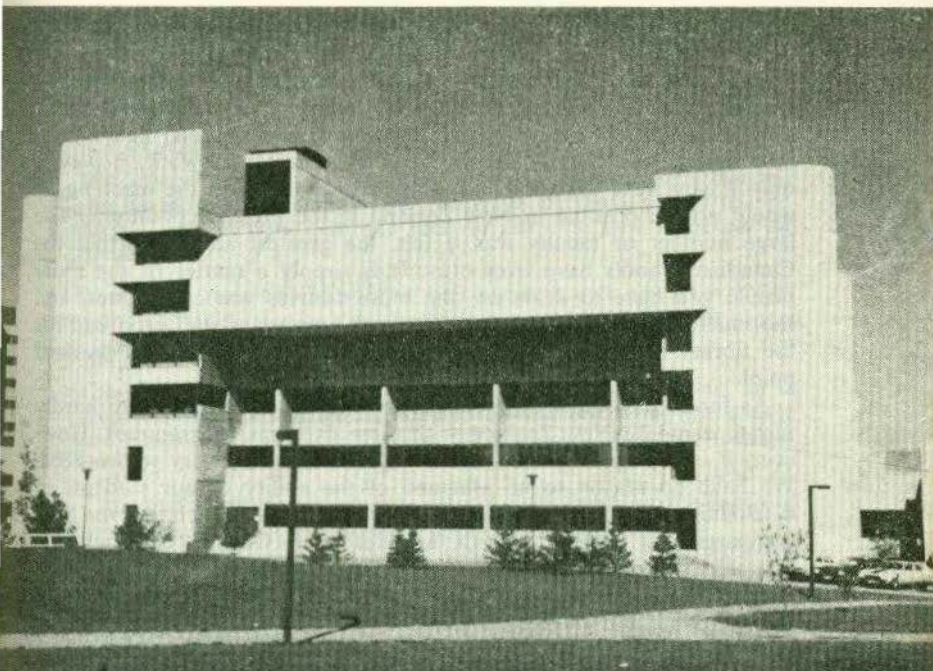
think, doubtful. What will matter is how the regulations are interpreted by the Credentials Committee. If the plan works correctly the A N Z L A just might become the mark of a professional attitude as mentioned by Mr Brown. The standard set would need to be high, and the result of being granted the award should be the availability to the applicant of any library position at any level.

What implications does this have for library education in New Zealand? The library profession seems to have a basic decision to make; either to follow more rigidly the professional/supportive staff distinction, or further to blur it. If we want the former, we must be prepared for the graduate course to become much more a study of methods and less of practice, and we shall have to realize that more in-service training of the graduates will be required in their first jobs. At the same time I believe we will have to raise the level of the Certificate course so that these people will be more able to take their truly supportive role. Also remember that there is a place in libraries for those without any library qualifications at all. Should the Library School be divided as is planned at the moment, what I have suggested here will almost certainly take place. On the other hand, should there be a desire to minimize the differences between levels of training, we can always reduce the present theoretical content of the graduate course. Each year there are some graduate students who suggest this. Such people show a complete lack of understanding of the basis of graduate education for librarianship. This feeling received its most recent expression in print in *New Zealand libraries* December 1975. (6)

### *Courses: Graduate courses*

It is generally agreed that librarianship is a graduate profession. On to the foundation of a general degree is built some specific instruction in library science. What is not agreed is the content or even the length of the library science portion. In New Zealand we have a one-year Diploma course, but from my experience in Canada I discovered that a one-year course (such as that at the University of Western Ontario) is the exception rather than the rule. The courses at both the University of Toronto and McGill University, Montreal, are of two years duration. In New Zealand all students do the same course except for a short five or six week period of options at the end of the year. A characteristic pattern in North America is one of a core course or courses plus a number of elective courses chosen from a wide range. To be more specific: at Western the one-year M L S degree consists of 15 courses, five for each of the three terms. Of the 15 courses nine were required courses forming the core, and six were electives. Each term the students took three required courses plus two electives chosen from about 20 offerings, which meant that the class sizes were pleasingly small. The situation at Toronto is similar, though a little differently arranged as the degree takes two years to acquire. Each of the two years of instruction consists of eight half-courses, or the





D. B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario.

equivalent. The programme consists of (a) three required courses taken during the first year, (b) two required half-courses taken either during the first year or the first term of the second year, (c) eight elective half-courses, two of which may be taken during the first year. Over 60 elective courses are listed in the calendar of the University of Toronto library school, but not all of these would necessarily be offered in any given year. It is possible to do the first year full-time and the rest of the M.L.S. part-time but the wording of the calendar suggests to me that this is not encouraged. The M.L.S. at McGill is also a two-year programme, and again the second year can be taken part-time. Again the basic pattern is that most of the required courses are completed in the first year, and the second year is mostly elective courses. Twenty-six electives are listed in the calendar, of which seven are to be taken. Not all the electives are available in any given year. Further information on these programmes is available in the calendars, but there is enough here to enable us to discuss some points.

I thought it was a very good system to have core courses and electives. We work under some difficulties in New Zealand by giving all students the same course, since some are simply not interested in the history of library classification, for example. Also some topics which are a study in themselves and form an entire elective course in Canada do not get here the attention they deserve (Academic libraries;

Rare books; Indexing, etc.) partly because there is no room available on the timetable. The core/elective arrangement is also material in keeping class sizes small—a real advantage for both student and teacher. The two elective courses I taught at Western (Academic libraries and Problems in the organization of information) had 10 and four students in them respectively. The system can work, however, only if you have a reasonable number of staff to do the teaching. It would not be possible in New Zealand in the present conditions. The large number of faculty was, I felt, the greatest advantage that the Canadian schools have over ours. It is simply a matter of the more people you have to draw on, the more courses you can mount, and the smaller the classes become. The small number of staff proposed for the library school at Victoria University is to my mind its weakest point.

As far as the courses themselves are concerned, it may seem hardly fair to compare New Zealand with these overseas programmes. However, it is my opinion that what we do here, we do very well indeed. We have no reason to be ashamed of the ability of our students in cataloguing, for example. The course of instruction which is given here compares very favourably with the offerings in Canada, although it is characteristic of Toronto and McGill that they divide cataloguing into a core course called "Organization of materials" or "Organization of information", and an elective called "Advanced cataloguing", or something similar.

In terms of what I wrote about the goals of library education and the levels of employment in libraries, it would be as well for us to have a look at the goals of these Canadian library education programmes. I will quote from the prospectus of each of the three schools we are considering:

#### First, University of Western Ontario:

The School . . . aims to graduate self-reliant, self-confident, resourceful and flexible people capable of working well with colleagues—graduates who will be able to form sound opinions based upon careful analysis, comparison, and synthesis of available information, and able to validate or invalidate such opinions by organizing and carrying out further systematic research. The School also hopes that its graduates will be practised at entertaining carefully the opinions and ideas of others, at the same time submitting those opinions to the same rigorous testing as their own. (7)

#### Second, Toronto:

The ultimate goal of education for librarianship should be to educate students who are able to think and act upon the issues presented to them as administrators, planners or practitioners. The emphasis of the education should be intellectual and theoretical so that librarians can think creatively about whatever area of librarianship they may be concerned with. Because of the continual change in the nature of libraries and librarianship it is not possible for library educators to foresee all the needs of the future. Therefore, they should endeavour



to educate librarians who can analyse problems and then work out their own solutions. Library education should provide a methodology which will enable librarians to function effectively in any professional situation. (8)

### Third, McGill:

The School's program aims to prepare its graduates to play a dynamic part in the operation of libraries today, to be responsive to change, flexible, and perceptive of the need to adjust to new modes in the future. (9)

These stated aims can be seen to be consistent with the A L A policy statement I quoted from earlier; perhaps it would be helpful to repeat the relevant one here:

The objective of the master's programs in librarianship should be to prepare librarians capable of anticipating and organizing the change and improvement required to move the profession constantly forward. (10)

The Canadian graduate library schools are then firmly in the camp of educating librarians for professional positions in libraries.

The 1976 New Zealand Library School prospectus has no clear concise statement of aims for the graduate course. It is not difficult to gather from what is expressed there, however, that the course is vocationally oriented. Strangely, some students constantly criticise the School for being "too theoretical". This appears to be the basis of the criticism of Mrs Morgan referred to above. (6) She suggests that the course at Western would have been much more to her liking. Unfortunately, nearly everything she says about that course is factually incorrect.

Some employing librarians take on Diploma holders straight from Library School with the expectation that they will, with a minimum of in-service training, be able to catalogue and classify, or that they will be competent reference librarians. I cannot think of any other reason, too, why we sometimes get demands to instruct in other classification schemes beside Dewey. Those libraries using L C or U D C sometimes ask for graduates to have greater practical experience in handling these schemes at Library School. There is a constant pressure also from the outside to concentrate on practical matters with less theory. It cannot be the function of a graduate library school to aim simply to produce practitioners, especially in a course which lasts only one year.

### *Courses: Certificate courses*

While I was in Canada I was able to get details of only one library technician programme. It is the one which operates in London, Ontario, at Fanshawe College, the local Community College. I was very impressed indeed with this programme so I will give a number of details about it. Its aim:

This program is designed to provide students with a basic knowledge of library systems, a practical background in basic day-to-day library procedures, the knowledge of the interdependence of procedures throughout the library, and an understanding of human relations with respect to library personnel and the general public. (11)

The two-year full-time course is limited to 26 students per year, who are chosen by interview from the four counties surrounding London. As the programme description suggests, it is a very comprehensive course, so it will be worthwhile for us to have a look at the specific topics covered. They are: audio-visual practice; principles of business of business organization; a survey of English literature; a survey of American and Canadian literature; historical writing; introduction to library science; library field work; reference and bibliography; cataloguing and classification; circulation systems; ordering and processing; machines in the library; human relations; sociology; introduction to typing. The students learn cataloguing by *Anglo-American cataloguing rules*, classification by Dewey, and subject headings with Sears—they are all required to buy the books for their own use. If this is typical of a Canadian library technician programme (and I have no reason to believe that it is not typical) then it is no wonder that I was impressed with this qualification. Nor is it any wonder that I have returned with the opinion that the level of the NZLA Certificate is rather low.

The Syllabus of the NZLA course tells us a little about its aims.

The NZLA Certificate course is intended for people working in libraries who wish to obtain training and a library qualification, but who are not in a position to undertake a University degree course leading to the Professional Course of the New Zealand Library School. It is a suitable qualification for people to be employed in library positions at an Intermediate level. (12)

This statement nicely tells us the expected level of the Certificate course. The use of the term "intermediate" suggests that there will be a higher level which will be available to the Diploma holders, and also a lower level available to people without library qualifications for whom there is still a place in libraries. Over past years the fact that there have been too few Diploma holders available to fill vacancies at high levels has meant that these positions have been filled by Certificate holders. This may have been partly the cause of the blurring of the difference between the two qualifications. There have been other factors, and one of the important ones may be the attitude of the students themselves. Certificate holders always emphasise the practical nature of their qualification, and relate this to their ability on the job. I hear it frequently stated that a new NZLA Certificate holder is more "use" in a library than a new Diploma holder because the Certificate holder has already been working three years in a library. The "use" of the Diploma holder's academic training is not mentioned. While this attitude of the Certificate holder is understandable, the strange thing



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is that many Diploma holders agree with them. As I mentioned before, I have heard it said by representatives of each group that they cover the same ground at Library School, but that the Certificate is covered in twelve weeks whilst the graduates take a whole year. Let it be said that this is simply not true. There is a considerable difference between the two, and I think the gap is widening each year. It is necessary to emphasise at this stage that I am here referring to the qualification itself, not to any particular holder of it. There are undoubtedly particularly capable Certificate holders who show a more professional attitude than some Diploma holders, and likewise some Diploma holders who will never make good librarians. The fact remains, however, that the qualification and the training are different.

The Certificate course receives its greatest criticism from those who say that the Preliminary examination is too hard, and that the sections at Library School are too busy. In view of the fact that I have stated that I consider the level of the Course to be rather low, these criticisms need to be looked at. The Course is intended to train people for intermediate positions in libraries. It is not expected, therefore, that everyone who happens to work in a library could, or even should, attempt the Course. Some sort of standard needs to be set and applied. If a reasonable standard is set, the qualification will have more meaning. One readily acknowledges that the sections at Library School are busy. They cannot be otherwise when you consider that in just twelve weeks, basic instruction in all aspects of practical librarianship needs to be given. It would, of course, improve matters if the sections were increased to six weeks, but I would like to see employing librarians taking more care to see that their students get a wide variety of experience between sections. Too many students, especially from larger libraries, are doing the same job at the end of the Course as they were at the beginning. It is no wonder that these people find the sections difficult. About half the students in the "C" Course in January 1976 told me that they had not catalogued a single book since their last section at Library School. If this is the case, who is to be blamed for the difficulties experienced? Perhaps it is not that the standard is too high, but that the function of the course as a block course is not properly interpreted by some employers.

The proposed new arrangements for library education which are awaiting government approval envisages splitting the present library school into two halves. Graduate library training would be undertaken by Victoria University of Wellington, and the Certificate Course would be taken over by Wellington Teachers College. If this comes about, we will be placing ourselves firmly in the camp of the A.L.A. and accentuating the differences of the levels of training. The graduate course could be expected to become less vocationally oriented, in fact I understand that a university professor has already said that that would be expected. The university library school would also be very small in terms of the number of teaching staff (four has been suggested as a starting figure) but the expectation is that the school would be able

to draw freely on teachers from other departments. This will depend on the goodwill that the professor of librarianship can generate. One thing we can be sure of—the University library school will not be a good library school simply because it is at the university. "High-standing schools in any university are created not by the mere fact of being part of the university, but the ability of the teaching staff in them." (13) Thus wrote David Wylie in 1950. The Library School had been in operation only four years but suggestions had already been made that the University of New Zealand take over the Library School. Mr Wylie argues in favour of the status quo.

The Certificate Course at the Teachers College would almost certainly be of a higher standard. The sections could well be lengthened, and the New Zealand Library Association Preliminary Examination could be expected to end as the Teachers College could not be expected to accept students whom it had no hand in selecting. The staff at the Teachers College is envisaged as being fairly large (seven is suggested) and would thus have a reasonable standing in the College. The Teachers College is also the obvious place for a course in School librarianship to be carried out. The graduates from the Teachers College library school could be expected to be good practical librarians. How the librarians of New Zealand will employ the graduates of each course remains to be seen.

I have the feeling that the splitting of Library School is a good deal easier in theory than in practice. Although the basic plan has apparently been decided to the satisfaction of all parties, there are still some considerations to be resolved. One of these is the setting up grant to be made available to each school. The University and the Teachers College will both need to make considerable purchases in the field of library science to cope with their course. Someone must decide what to do about the basic texts, now provided for each student, namely Dewey classification, *Anglo-American cataloguing rules*, and *Sears List of subject headings*. These represent major items of expenditure. Some amount of duplication in book stock and serial subscriptions seems inevitable, but must be kept at a minimum. There is the allied question of the fate of the present Library School book-stock and the National Library's collection in library science, neither of which contains many duplicates. One hopes that the students of both courses will have reasonably ready access to the National Library stock.

I must also ask where 10 or 11 good teachers are going to come from. The improved salaries and conditions available at the two teaching institutions will help to attract more applications than is the case now, but we can only hope that the applications will be from the right people. Salaries offered in New Zealand are unlikely to attract suitable overseas applicants.

One final point needs to be made. All the negotiations for changes in library education talk of the improvements which will be possible for each course. Whilst it is right and proper to look for improvement,



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the implication seems to be that there is something second-rate about what we do now. It is my opinion that what is done by the present library school is done very well, and we need not be apologetic for the ability of our graduates. Where we fall down is in what is not done at all, especially aspects of automation in libraries, administration, and comparative librarianship. We simply do not have the staff with expertise in these areas.

There are in libraries a wide range of tasks, some of which require clerical ability, some require training in library practice, and some require professional decision-making. The last two of these areas are the primary concern of library educators. In Canada and the United States the problems of education for the two levels is tackled by training librarians at the university library schools and technicians at the community colleges. The proposal for New Zealand is that we should do the same, although in our case intermediate level training will be carried out at the Wellington Teachers College. Although this is seen by some people to solve the problem of library education, it really just replaces one set of difficulties with another. With the goodwill of the library profession we can no doubt find satisfactory solutions should the proposed split take place.

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